

Fort McMurray Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals



CLOSING PLENARY - PANEL DISCUSSION

Fort McMurray Fires: Learning from Canada's Largest Animal Disaster
Response

CFHS National Animal Welfare Conference 2017



Who We Are

- Only local animal shelter in the RMWB
- Serving Fort McMurray and 11 rural and Indigenous communities over 66,361 km²
- The FMSPCA delivered assistance and supports to more than 5000 pets in 2016
- Offering programs and services which reaches from our youngest to our seniors



Evacuation and On-Site Response

- Supported the RMWB who was the lead agency
- Worked alongside numerous agencies in the extraction, shelter, care and transport of regional pets
- FMSPCA pets placed with local foster families
- FMSPCA shelter and veterinary clinic base of rescue operation



Challenges

- Unprecedented disaster
- Condition in the emergency zone
- Community expectation
- Communications
- Emergency impacts on resources/access to funding



Successes

- Approx. 1200 pets evacuated
- Placement of FMSPCA animals with partner organizations
- Supplier support (food and supplies in-kind)
- Support from across Canada and beyond
- In-shelter veterinary clinic essential during emergency response
- Community Impact Surveys

Assessment Findings

- 90% of survey respondents feel pet companionship provided direct benefits to their wellbeing during and post-wildfire
- 22% of respondent pet owning households experienced challenges in finding pet friendly accommodations
- In contrast, 24% indicated that they are thinking of adding an additional pet to their household. 17% indicated that they have already become new pet owners post wildfire
- 37% indicating they became new pet owners for companionship and to prevent loneliness
- 30% of respondents indicated they became new pet owners for the mental health benefits



Key Learnings

- Create pet emergency response plans
- Establish a formal partnership with a like minded organization
- 90% of the response and funding support you will need comes after the rescue
- Mental health and wellness for staff
- Communicate with in-community organizations prior to sharing information, images and video
- Strong adoption campaign



Thank You

For those of you who supported us, who were pulling for us, we will be forever grateful for your kindness

Thank you all so much for helping to make a difference and save lives